

The Last Spartan (Version 20)

by DinoJake

Category: Halo, Mass Effect

Genre: Adventure, Sci-Fi

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2013-04-02 07:25:00

Updated: 2014-04-02 06:24:40

Packaged: 2016-04-27 03:09:51

Rating: T

Chapters: 3

Words: 14,553

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: After a long deserved rest, the Master Chief awakens in a whole new galaxy.

1. Chapter 1

****Hey everybody! DinoJake here with a special announcement!****

****As you all know, The Last Spartan is easily my most popular fanfiction with almost fourteen hundred follows, fourteen hundred favs, eighteen hundred reviews, and its very own TVtropes page! However, as some reviewers point out, the story's flaws are many. Particularly, the setting.****

****When I first started this fanfic three years ago, I didn't really know much about the Halo lore, to be honest. Really, the only reason I had Humanity do away with slipspace was purely for story's sake; I KNEW that slipspace was faster than Mass Effect FTL, and at the time, I saw that as a problem. Less time in space meant less time for Chief to spend alone on board the Normandy which means less opportunities to develop as a character.****

****Not only was that completely stupid reasoning (Eezo, slipspace, there'd still be plenty of time to kill on that ship regardless of FTL method), but I also unwittingly made Humanity to be a race of weaklings, which is isn't the Humanity that Halo fans know and love.****

****I tried to justify it. I've even claimed that, though this was a mistake, I would keep it since it may open up other opportunities to create my own takes on both Halo and Mass Effect lore. Hell, me and another author on this site were actually talking about co-writing a First-Contact War-based fanfic in order to explain how it all went down in a believable way that would actually be kind of in-character for Halo's Humanity.****

****But recently, I've finally realized that, from the very beginning,**

this fanfic's setting was flawed, and nothing I can do could really change that. World-building is the most important aspect of a good space opera, and I failed in that department, which basically means I failed in general.**

But I'm not going to give up so easily. Even my most harshest critics have said that characterization is this story's biggest strength. The concept isn't flawed, just the execution, which means I just need to try again. Thus, I've decided to completely reboot The Last Spartan. What you're about to read is, hopefully, a more accurate portrayal of Humanity in the 27th Century.

The first scene is an edited scene from Chapter 2. The rest is completely original material, written especially for this bold new project of mine. Just keep in mind that this is a rough draft, so I may change things upon request. Think of this as the pilot to a new series. In any case, enjoy.

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0832 Hours, February 16th, 2683

Undisclosed Location in the Hades Gamma Cluster

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There he was. Master Chief Petty Officer Sierra-117. Or simply 'Chief' as he was often called. Inside the pod, his Mjonir MK-VI armor still brandishing fresh scars from the Battle of the Ark. It was a near-religious experience, to be in the presence of the Chief's body. For many of the UNSC marines present, he was the reason they joined the Alliance.

Captain Anderson could hardly believe it. Over a hundred years ago, this man practically saved the Human race single-handed. When the Arbiter crash-landed on Earth alone all those years ago, Lord Hood said that the Master Chief, both body and soul, belonged to history.

Until today, when a UNSC exploratory vessel stumbled upon the wreck of the Forward Unto Dawn. UNSC Command sent in nearly all of Fifth Fleet to completely lock down the star system to make sure nothing else got in or out. The history books said that the portal through which the Forward Unto Dawn escaped the Ark had been unstable. Some physicists believed that, instead of being destroyed, the Dawn's wreckage had simply been teleported to some random part of the galaxy. God only knew how long it was floating here.

The captain walked up to the pod, and paused for a moment. He took a long look inside at the motionless SPARTAN-II within. "He must've climbed in here after dropping a distress beacon, hoping he'd be found." he said to the marines with a hint of sadness in his voice. "Been in this cryo-pod ever since." he sighed.

The Chief was a hero. If it wasn't for him Humanity, possibly even the rest of the galaxy, would be dead right now. He deserved a better end than this. A moment of silence fell over the room, honoring the Chief for all he had done for his species.

"Alright." Anderson said as the moment of silence passed. "Let's see

if we can't unhook this pod. It's time this hero came home. Michaels, think you can do it?"

"Sure." Cpl. Timothy Michaels said. He was his squad's tech expert, so he definitely knew his way around machines. He walked up to the pod and his omni-tool lit up. "The ship's systems aren't based on Prothean tech, but they ARE very primitive. Hacking the cryo-pod shouldn't be too hard..."

After about thirty seconds of continuously pressing buttons on his omni-tool; "Got it. I'm in." he said. He then pressed a few more buttons. "Okay, now I just need to find the..."

He paused, his sentence stopping dead in its tracks. Anderson turned to the tech expert. "Need to find the what?" he asked.

"That can't be right." Michaels stated while shaking his head. He pressed a few more buttons, then paused again. "Holy crap..."

"What? Is something wrong?" Anderson pressed, becoming more and more concerned.

"Uh...I think that depends on what your definition of 'wrong' is, sir." Michaels answered. He looked up from his omni-tool and looked at the captain square in the eye. "He's still alive."

A moment of shocked silence took the room for a few seconds. Then, Anderson took it back. "What do you mean alive?" he asked.

"According to my omni-tool, all of Chief's vital signs are still good." the tech replied.

"Let me see that." Anderson said as he walked up to the tech. He looked over Michaels' shoulder. Sure enough, there on the omni-tool's holographic screen was a series of pulsing lines, all indicating that the Chief is still alive and well.

"I don't believe it." Anderson said in disbelief. "I mean, Cryo-Sleep does do a good job preserving the human body but...130 years?"

"What do we do now, sir?" Michaels asked. Anderson paused in thought. The intent of this mission was to retrieve Chief's remains and ship them off to Earth so a proper funeral service could be held. At the very least, they could've taken some things from the ship to the museum in New Mombassa. But the Master Chief still alive in his cryo-pod? That was the last thing Anderson was prepared for. Needless to say, it made the situation a little more complicated.

"Sir, I've found something." said another tech expert. He was kneeling at what looked like a terminal of some kind, less than ten feet away from the chief. He was tapping away at his omni-tool, his vision frequently switching between it and the terminal.

"What is it?" Anderson asked as he approached.

"It's a data terminal of some kind." the other tech replied.

"Can you get anything from it?" Anderson asked. Now that the situation had changed, he wanted to know every last detail he could.

He didn't want any more curve balls thrown at him and more info couldn't hurt.

"Maybe..." the tech said as he tapped away on the omni-tool. The omni-tool ran on element zero technology, while the computers on this ship don't. Using an omni-tool to lift data from the databanks of a 26th century ship was kind of like getting a software product made by one company to co-operate with another from a different company. It wasn't impossible, just difficult. Thankfully, it was nothing a skilled hacker couldn't handle as only five minutes at most went by before the tech said; "Okay, I'm in. Let's see what we got here..."

He tapped a few more keys on the omni-tool as some interesting displays popped up on the screen. "Okay, I think we got something. Data storage program, from the looks of it. Maybe it can shed some light here..."

Turned out, that program was storing data alright. Just not the kind of data anyone was expecting.

After a few more taps from the omni-tool, the holographic light on top of the terminal lit up, and a blue feminine figure appeared. She was about a foot in height, had short hair, and seemed to wear a body suit of some kind. She smiled upon seeing the startled tech expert.

"Oh good. Rescue." she commented in a rather cheerful tone.

The room fell deadly silent, something that did not go unnoticed by the holographic woman. "What?" she asked. Anderson took a step forward. He didn't want to ask this question, knowing what the answer was and that it was going to make things even more complicated. But he had little other choice.

"Are you...Cortana?" he asked.

The hologram smiled as she stood before the captain, puffing her chest out with pride. "UNSC Artificial Intelligence serial number CTN 0452-9. At your service."

It was then that Cortana realized that something was amiss. She took a look around the room. Rather than wearing the modified ODST uniforms typical of space troopers (soldiers trained for zero-G missions), the marines wore what looked more like skin-tight uniforms and their helmets looked nothing like the original ODST. Cortana knew that it would probably be a few years and that she should have foreseen some degree of change in the uniform. But this was extreme. There was only one conclusion the AI could logically draw. She turned to Captain Anderson.

"Chief and I have been here a while, haven't we?" she asked.

"Yes." Anderson answered with a nod. What else could he say?

Cortana paused, processing the new data. "Don't sugar-coat it. How long?" the AI braced herself for the worst.

"To put it bluntly, well over a century." Anderson replied.

"131 years, to be exact." Michaels added.

Not since the revelations of Halo had Cortana been so shocked. Over a century? Was it even possible to be in storage that long and still be operational? Cortana ran a quick self-diagnostic, worried that something might've become corrupted, ignoring the worried mutterings of the new aliens. The AI sighed in relief, seeing that there was nothing wrong with her. Her concerns than focused to her spartan.

"Is Chief alright?" she asked.

"According to my tech expert, his life signs are still stable." Anderson answered. Cortana accessed the computer in Chief's pod to confirm. True to the stranger's word, the Chief was still stable. She turned to the Captain, viewing that there was now only one thing left to do.

"Well, what are you waiting for? Wake him up." she said.

Anderson was actually taken aback by this.

"Er...well..."

"Weeeeelllll?" Cortana asked, not liking where this conversation was going.

"We came on board this ship looking for the Chief's _remains._" Anderson explained. "We thought that after over a century in cryo-sleep he'd be dead. While it's nice to see he's not...it complicates things a little."

"Well, you can't just leave him here." Cortana pointed out.

"We don't plan to." Anderson replied. Cortana glared daggers at the captain. He sighed in defeat. "We just need to figure out the right way to go about this. I'll contact my superior and inform him of the situation. We'll play it out from there. Excuse me."

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"So let me get this straight." Hackett began at last. "Both Chief and Cortana are still alive?"

"Cortana seems to be fully operational. Doesn't seem rampant." Anderson said. "Chief is still in cryo-sleep. All his vital signs are stable at the moment. But I don't want to do anything without your say-so."

There was a pause on Hackett's end. Understandable. It was a lot to take in. "Well, this is quite the dilemma. We can't just leave him there, but we can't just wake him up either."

"With all due respect Admiral, this is the Master Chief we're talking about. He's the living embodiment of everything Humanity stands for. It's a hard thing to just let lie on the shelf." Anderson commented.

"I know. If it weren't for the Master Chief, Humanity would be extinct right now." Hackett admitted. "We could definitely use him, butâ€|.it's been so long since his time. I don't know if he's

psychologically fit for battle in this century."

"Considering the kind of enemy we're up against, I say we give it a shot." Anderson said.

Hackett paused again, this time out of thought instead of shock. "Chief would be a valuable asset." he admitted. "He definitely earned the title of humanity's greatest hero. Defeated the Covenant and the Flood."

"He's the only reason any Human is still alive." Anderson added.

"President Harper can't question his courage, that's for certain." Hackett stated. "Are we sure about this?"

"Humanity needs a hero right now." Anderson said resolutely. "Chief's the best we've got. I say we do it."

Another pause. Then; "I'll make the call. I'll be labeled crazy for it, but it's not like there's a rule against it. In the mean time, you know what to do."

"Roger that. Anderson out." the captain said. With that, he re-entered the pod chamber. Whatever conversation Cortana was having with the marines ended right then and there. The AI looked at Anderson expectantly.

"I've just gone over it with my superior, Admiral Hackett." Anderson stated. "And he seems to be all for the idea." He then turned to Michaels. "Wake him up."

The tech expert was taken aback. He looked around, unsure. "What, you mean right here, right now?"

"No time like the present." Anderson said. Cortana was smiling ear to virtual ear.

"About time." the AI commented.

"Are you sure you want us to do this?" one of the marines inquired as he approached the AI. "If the Chief wakes up, he'll be waking up to a galaxy that's very different from the one he knew."

"I've seen him survive grenade explosions, plasma fire, and even ACTUAL fire once. He's stared death in the face too many times to count." Cortana replied. "Trust me. I think my Spartan can handle a little culture shock."

Within moments, Michaels was tapping away furiously on his omni-tool as he laughed nervously to himself, not believing this was actually happening. At one point, he stopped. "Something wrong, Michaels?" Anderson asked.

"I just realized...we're bringing back the greatest hero in Human history." Michaels said. "We're MAKING history right now. I...I need a moment to take this in."

"We haven't got all day." Cortana said. "Sometime in the NEXT 131 years would be nice, thank you."

"Right, right. Sorry." the tech quickly apologized to the AI as he resumed his work. "Okay. I don't have a drumroll, so a countdown will have to do. Cracking open the pod in 3...2...1..." He tapped his omni-tool one last time.

There was a loud hiss as gas blew out from nozzles as the pod was de-pressurized. After that, the pod started to glow a little. The screens on the pod's control panel blinked to life, showing the Chief's vital signs and the progress of his thawing. That's when it happened. He moved. The Chief shifted around a little in the pod, apparently waking up. The Human marines dared not breathe another breath.

"Easy Chief." Cortana said, seeing the way the spartan shifted. "You're still thawing. You don't want to hurt yourself."

Chief nodded in acknowledgement. He continued shifting, but at a slower and gentler rate this time. Eventually, the pod door opened up just as the Chief was finally starting to get some feeling back in his limbs. He floated out of the pod and activated his magnetic boots, sticking to the floor with a dull thud that startled several of the room's occupants. He looked at Captain Anderson, recognizing him as, due to the manner of his space suit, the highest-ranking officer here. He saluted.

"Master Chief Petty Officer Sierra-117. Reporting for duty, sir." The marines were so breathless that at this point, they were practically blue.

"Captain David Anderson." Anderson saluted back. "At ease, Chief." the captain was grinning ear-to-ear. He still couldn't believe it. The Chief, alive and well, standing right in front of him. It was surreal, yet exciting.

Just like with Cortana, the new UNSC uniforms did not pass by Chief. "How long have I been in there, exactly?" he asked.

"Approximately 131 years." Cortana answered. Chief turned to the AI, who smiled at him. "Welcome to the 27th century."

While Chief was happy that Cortana was okay...did she really just say 131 years? Chief paused to contemplate this for a brief moment. Of course, a brief moment for a spartan was about 2 or 3 seconds. 4 at the most. He then turned to Captain Anderson.

"Guess I've got some catching up to do, huh?" he asked. Anderson nodded.

"Grab Cortana and the marines and I will escort you back to our ship, the _Mt. Everest. _We'll bring you up to speed on everything you've missed once we get there."

Chief nodded before walking to the terminal to take out Cortana's chip. He then inserted it into the back of his helmet. He walked over to where he put away his MA5C assault rifle to take it out of the weapons rack. "So where are we going, Captain?" he asked as he placed the rifle on his back.

"We're going home, Chief." Anderson answered. "We're going to Earth."

Now that you're back, there's a lot that needs to be done."

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0511 Hours, February 23rd, 2683

UNSC Ghengis Khan

High orbit over Palaven

Trebia System, Apien Crest

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John balanced the combat knife on the tip of his finger, handle up. It was a trick that Fred-104 taught him way back in the Human-Covenant War. The Human-Covenant War. Over a hundred years ago. Had it really been that long? He still couldn't believe how much had changed. As he stood in the _Ghengis Khan_'s cargo hold, he thought about everything that happened on New Mombasa that lead him to this new mission.

Upon arriving on Earth, the Master Chief was immediately taken to ONI Headquarters in New Mombasa. The first couple of hours were spent on physical exams to make sure the Spartan was still healthy and in good fighting condition. Running on a treadmill? Check. Whacking knee with a hammer to test reflexes? Check. Weight-lifting? Check. Chief passed that last one with flying colors, obviously. There was worry among the medical staff that the Battle of the Ark left Chief in a bad way, but thankfully his armor was built tough and absorbed most of the damage. Save for some minor scratches, bruises and burns (minor by SPARTAN-II standards, anyway), Chief was given a clean bill of health.

Once the docs gave him the all-clear, ONI got their hands on the Chief and filled him in on everything he missed. First and foremost, the Covenant were no more. The entire Sangheili race, through a combination of in-fighting and a mysterious disease that wiped out their food crops, were now extinct. Chief didn't know how to feel about that. On the one hand, the Sangheili glassed many Human colonies and killed many Humans, a few of which were the Chief's friends. But extinction? That seemed harsh. But at least now there was no chance of the Sangheili ever rising up again to threaten Humanity.

The rest of the former-Covenant races were in a state of disarray since the Great Schism. Kig-Yar and Jiralhanae lacked anything resembling a formal government and mostly lived in remote outposts out in a new area of the galaxy known as the Terminus Systems. With nowhere else to go, many Unggoy went to the UNSC, pleading for asylum. Thus, the Unggoy became the first client race of the UNSC, but they wouldn't be the last. The Yanme'e tried to make a name for themselves by attacking Human territory while it was still recovering from the Human-Covenant War, but an aggressive counter-attack with chemical weapons, basically pesticides on steroids, wiped out so many Yanme'e that they were effectively brought into line, forcefully made into yet another client race of the UNSC. The Chief judged it harsh but necessary.

After their brief war with the Yanme'e, the UNSC saw a period of relative peace lasting eighty or so years. Then, one day in the year 2648, they discovered alien ruins of unknown origin on a planet on the very edge of the Orion Arm. Found in the ruins was a starmap that lead the UNSC to something spectacular.

It lead them to a mass relay.

Upon discovering the mass relay network, the UNSC realized that the galaxy was so much larger than they could've possibly imagined. So many new worlds, so many new treasures, all theirs for the taking.

Of course, with the rest of the galaxy open to the UNSC to explore, it was inevitable that they make first contact with new alien races. In 2657, that's what happened. An alien race known as the Turians attacked a ship activating a dormant mass relay and traced the ship's to Shanxi, one of the new colonies that the UNSC settled. The Turians then invaded the planet and took it over. ONI had reason to suspect that they planned on using it as a staging ground to gear up for further incursions into UNSC space.

After the UNSC took the planet back, it was learned that the Turians were part of a greater collective of alien races known as the Citadel Races. Their capital was a large space station, not quite as big as High Charity but still very big, known as the Citadel. In charge of this collective was the Citadel Council. They managed to call off the Turians and broker a truce. They then approached the UNSC and gave them a choice; either give up AI's and Slipspace to join their collective, or remain a separate state and risk war with the Turian Hierarchy.

The Chief was happy to learn that then-President Goyle told the Council to go fuck themselves.

Since then, the UNSC remained a separate state, completely independent from the Citadel races. No technological exchange, no cultural exchange, the UNSC weren't even interested in having an embassy on the Citadel. As a result, the UNSC and Citadel Council had been in a state of cold war for over twenty years, each preparing for war with the other while the UNSC continued to expand its territory into the Attican Traverse.

The expansion was not without problems. In 2671, the Batarian Hegemony, another member of the Citadel Races, demanded the UNSC ceased its expansion into the Skyllian Verge, where the Hegemony hoped to expand its own territory. The UNSC refused, colonizing those worlds before the Batarians had a chance to. The Batarians reacted with what became known as the Skyllian Blitz in 2676, a mass attack on the Human colony world of Elysium. The Batarians officially denied having anything to do with the attack, claiming it was mostly pirates and raiders of various races that attacked the planet. ONI investigated the matter and found that the Batarians were only telling half the truth. It was indeed a multi-species fleet of pirates that were responsible for the attack, but the Batarian Hegemony bank-rolled the attack. The UNSC took this as an act of war.

The UNSC ignored any warnings from the Citadel Council not to attack a member race and began its incursion into Batarian space. What

historians now call the Skyllian War lasted for a little under two years. In 2678, the war reached its climax in what became known as the Desolation of Bahak. ONI agents strapped rockets to a large asteroid from the asteroid belt of the Bahak System, a key system for the Batarian Hegemony due to its colony on Aratoht. ONI then used the rockets to launch the asteroid directly at the system's mass relay, blowing it up, and completely destroying the Bahak System. Demoralized by such a heavy loss at the hands of such a powerful foe, the Batarians surrendered. Khar'shan was now a UNSC world, the Batarians now a client race of Humanity.

Though the Batarians were a Citadel Race, the Citadel Council was hesitant to declare war on the UNSC. However, relations between the two galactic governments grew worse and worse with each passing year. Eventually, the Council decided that enough was enough. The Turians launched a pre-emptive attack on the UNSC world of Eden Prime, followed by a declaration of war. The Citadel War had begun.

The UNSC began by reinforcing colonial defenses all around its territorial border with Citadel Space. And now, in what is being called Operation: LOW BLOW, the UNSC is launching its first major attack; Palaven. The Turian homeworld. Using the mass relays in combination with their superior slipspace technology, the UNSC has launched a fleet to make a beeline straight for Palaven. The Turians make up the majority of the Citadel Council's military muscle, so taking out the Turian homeworld right out the gate will put a serious dent in the Council's fighting ability, giving the UNSC a crucial advantage right out of the gate.

The Chief checked his internal mission clock. 0515. Almost time to drop. He put his combat knife into his sheath and walked over to where his new squad had gathered to talk. It was made up of seven men and women.

His immediate second-in-command was Lieutenant Kaidan Alenko. Despite the asian name, he was actually from Vancouver, Canada. What made him unique from the rest of the squad, besides his rank, were his biotics. Biotics was a term given to what could best be described as telekinesis fueled by element zero. The Citadel Races had known about biotics for centuries and even had biotics-users within their own ranks for about as long as they knew about them. However, ONI was able to gain information on biotics with its extensive spy network and quickly began training their own. Kaidan Alenko was one of the first. In the time Chief he knew him, he found Kaidan to be calm and rather laid back. According to his profile, Kaidan was a professional soldier, the very model of what a good UNSC marine should be.

The squad's marksman was Ashley Williams. Ashley was interesting, as she was the granddaughter of the infamous General Williams, a controversial general from the First Contact War. General Williams' forces were originally staged in New Taiyuan, Shanxi's capital city. However, the city came under heavy siege by the Turians during the First Contact War, the Turians willing to bomb entire city blocks just to take out a single fire team. Williams pulled his forces out of the city, but not before feeding the Turians false information that his forces were planning to surrender. Williams had fallen back to a reasonable distance just as the Turians moved into the city to seize control of it. Williams then detonated several small nukes his forces had left around the city, completely destroying the city and every Turian inside of it. Though he was applauded for eliminating a

huge Turian ground force, many hated General Williams for killing all the Human civilians still in the city. Her psych profile states that Ashley was looking to prove herself worthy of the Williams name, saying that a real Williams gets the job done at _any _cost. Chief made a note to keep an eye on her. She might be a little overzealous.

Speaking of overzealous, up next was Sergeant James Vega, the squad's man-at-arms. His background wasn't as glamorous as Kaidan's or Ashley's; a young man who grew up in the rougher parts of California, James joined the UNSC Marine Corps to make himself into a better man. When he wasn't out on missions, he was subjecting himself to a physical regimen of pull-ups, push-ups, and sit-ups. Unfortunately, his profile mentioned a tendency to be reckless on the field. During the Human-Batarian War, he took out an enemy shuttle by driving a shuttle of his own into their shuttle at ramming speed. When asked why, James simply shrugged and said 'cuz it was fun.' The Chief would have to keep an eye on that one.

Next was Jennifer Jacquis, the squad's biotic combat expert. While Kaidan was a powerful biotic in his own right, he was trained as a sentinel-class biotic, biotic-users who also specialize in combat and field engineering. Jennifer, on the other hand, was a vanguard-class biotic. Not only did she know a wider array of biotic techniques, but her biotics were also more powerful and she uses them much more aggressively. While she was absolutely vicious on the field, her psych profile detailed that the Human-Batarian War was extremely traumatic for her, due to having been captured and extensively tortured by the Batarians during the conflict. The incident gave her post-traumatic stress disorder, and according to ONI, she had never been the same way since. Thankfully, she's still psychologically fit to serve.

Next was the squad's close quarters combat expert and runner, Kyle Nolan. According to his profile, Kyle Nolan was a veteran of the First Contact War, during which his hand was shot off by a Turian sniper. He gained two things from that experience; an artificial hand, and a burning hatred of the Turians. Similar to Jennifer, Kyle was diagnosed with PTSD, but is still considered psychologically stable enough to serve. He'll certainly be motivated to fight down on Palaven, but the Chief was worried that his own personal hatreds would get the better of him.

The remaining two members of the Chief's team were, surprisingly enough, non-Humans. In their exploration of the galaxy, the UNSC found that not every species was a fan of the Citadel Council. The squad's grenadier and heavy weapons expert was Urdnot Wrex, a Krogan mercenary hired by ONI, one of many for this campaign. The UNSC was able to win the Krogan over with promises of a cure for the 'genophage,' a sterility plague the Turians and Salarisians inflicted on their species a thousand years ago. Chief wasn't sure if ONI was actually working on a genophage cure, or just made false promises to make the Krogan want to join their side. He secretly hoped for the latter. Without the genophage to curb their numbers, the Chief knew that the Krogan would eventually overtake the galaxy again; a fight that the UNSC would have difficulty winning. Anyway, Wrex was also a biotic who, much like Kyle, had a healthy hatred of Turians. As long as ONI continued signing his checks and promising his race a future, Wrex should be sufficiently loyal to the Master Chief.

The other alien squad member was Tali'Zorah nar Rayya, a Quarian. Quarians were a race of engineers who made a race of AI's called the Geth. The Geth turned on the Quarians three hundred years ago and drove them off of their own homeworld. Since then, they've been wandering the galaxy in what they call the 'Quarian Flotilla.' They used to be a Citadel race, but they were kicked out for breaking the Council's 'no AI's allowed,' rule. When the Citadel War broke out, the UNSC approached the Quarians and offered them vengeance in exchange for their engineering expertise. Though the Quarians were wary of the UNSC's liberal use of AI's (understandable, given their history with AI's), they agreed to lend their aid. Tali was a combat engineer and team medic. The squad would have to keep her covered. No doubt the Turians would want to shoot her first if they ever figure out her team role. Chief wasn't too worried about it though; she was good enough with a shotgun to cover herself if need be.

As the Chief approached, the team ceased their conversation and stood to attention. Cortana then appeared on a nearby terminal. "So Blue Team, ready to move out?" she cheerfully asked them. She was now the ship AI of the _Ghengis Khan_

"What's our objective?" Chief asked.

"You'll be dropped onto Palaven's surface via slipspace pods." Cortana explained. "The planet has a class-1 radiation hazard, so keep those hardsuits sealed up tight. Your objective is a massive anti-aircraft battery. You'll have the element of surprise on your side, but Turian positions are legendary for their fortifications, so you should still expect a tough fight."

Cortana crossed her arms across her chest in a haughty sort of pose. "Looks like you're gonna have your work cut out for you." she teased.

"Don't I always?" Chief asked. He turned to his squad as Cortana's image shimmered away. "Let's pile into the pods, people." With that, he lead his squad to where the drop pods were located. They made their way out of the cargo hold and down a series of corridors, and down a fleet of stairs to the drop chambers. Doors leading to drop pods lined the walls of the narrow corridor. Dozens of other soldiers navigated the corridor in search of their own pods, only to stop and applaud as they saw the Master Chief and his team walk by.

The Chief sighed. He waved back at the marines, silently wishing that he wasn't so damn important to UNSC morale.

The squad eventually found their own pods and climbed in. The Chief took a seat and pushed a button, the pod door automatically sealing. "All squad, check in." Chief ordered over TEAMCOM. He was greeted with a series of green winks, except for two. "Blue-Seven. Blue-Eight. What's the problem?"

"It's cramped in here." Wrex protested. "This drop pod was clearly _not_ _designed with Krogan in mind."

"File a complaint to brass, frog-boy." Jennifer slandered.

"I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do." Tali said. "I've never really dropped before."

"Never?" Chief asked.

"My training was kind of rushed." Tali replied shyly.

Chief sighed. "Blue-Five. Give Blue-Eight a crash course." he ordered.

"Will do." Kyle replied. "Okay Tali listen up, cuz Uncle Kyle is gonna teach you how to drop into Hell."

The drop pods descended into position. "Step one: Make sure your seatbelt is good and tight. Step two: Make sure your helmet is secure."

A vidscreen of Wrex's face appeared on Chief's HUD over TEAMCAM. "Don't need a helmet." he said as he tapped his head crest with a chuckle.

"Suit yourself, Wrex." Kyle said. "Finally, the third and final stepâ€¦".

The pods finally exited the ship's hull, exposed to the midnight blue of slipspace. They were locked into firing position, ready to launch.

"Pray to whatever deity you believe in _for dear life_." Kyle finished.

"I don't believe in God." Jennifer said.

Kyle chuckled. "Trust me, Jen. According to the launch clock, you're gonna turn into a born-again christian in threeâ€¦twoâ€¦oneâ€¦".

The pods launched. A few seconds afterward, they exited slipspace in orbit over Palaven. They and thousands of other drop pods plummeted to the snot-green surface of the Turian homeworld below.

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1917 Hours, March 10th, 2683

Surface of Palaven

Trebia System, Apien Crest

â€¦

The Battle of Palaven had been going on for well over two weeks. The Master Chief wasn't surprised. He did his homework on the Turians. They were a warrior culture similar to the Sangheili from the Human-Covenant War, and their homeworld reflected that. Every last settlement, from small rural villages to bustling metropolises, were each a fortress by its own right. The UNSC had not encountered a single Turian civilian, because every Turian they encountered was armed and eager to open fire on the Humans. UNSC forces were pushing their way to Cipritine, Palaven's capital city, but it was slow going. The Turians were covering their retreat with mines, chemical traps, and even ambushes. The Humans were inching their way forward, but the Turians were making them pay for each and every inch in

blood. Casualties on both sides were high.

Blue Team had just been issued a new assignment. They were tasked with eliminating a key target, a tactical guerrilla expert who's been leading some kind of civilian militia against the UNSC. The Turians called him 'Archangel,' making him a symbol of hope in the battle. ONI believes that terminating the Archangel would deliver a heavy blow to local Turian morale.

His last known location was at a gatehouse along the Nanus River. The good news was that UNSC forces were able to wipe out his whole team and have been keeping him pinned in that position for over a day. Bad news was he was slaughtering every soldier the brass sent over. The bridge in particular was a deathtrap. Tunnelers were working around the clock to dig underneath the gatehouse and take him by surprise. Until then, all the UNSC can do is fire on that position and hope that the next wave of soldiers charging across the bridge would last longer than the last one. The Spartan found it odd that the UNSC did all of this just to take down one Turian.

The Master Chief stood with his team behind a building adjacent to the bridge. Across the dirt road in the small town on the outskirts of Cipritine, was another squad of UNSC marines. Everyone was checking their weapons, getting ready for the charge. "Okay, here's the plan." Chief began over TEAMCOM. "Tali, James, you two are with me. We're going to charge straight across the bridge. Once we do, we'll activate our overshield programs. That should help us stand up to Archangel's sniper rifle better."

"You sure these overshields will work Sparks?" James asked Tali, addressing her by the nickname he gave her.

"Positive." Tali boasted in reply. "I designed them myself. Quarian shields are ironclad shields."

"Here's hoping you're right." Chief replied. "Everyone else stay here and open fire on Archangel's position. Keep his head down, just in case."

"Will do, Chief." Kaidan replied.

The Master Chief held up three fingers and wordlessly counted down. Once he tucked his third finger back in, he pumped his fist. He, James and Tali then activated their overshields and charged across the bridge. Chief looked up, expecting to see Archangel on the balcony of the gatehouse, clad in his by-now signature blue armor and aiming for the Spartan's head.

Except Archangel wasn't there. That's when he realized something was wrong.

It was then that the trio were suddenly enveloped in an explosion of blue static electricity. "Tech mine!" Tali yelled. It was then that Chief saw a Turian-shaped glimmer standing in the gatehouse's doorway.

"Take cover!" Chief yelled as he dived for the sandbag at the end of the bridge. He made it, but his two squadmates weren't as lucky. The Turian caught James right in the chest, knocking him to the ground with a yell of pain, clutching his chest wound.

"James!" Tali yelled as she tried to help her Human compatriot. Archangel fired again, the shot ripping through Tali's helmet, exiting the other side. The Quarian fell to the ground, blue-purple blood pouring out of the head wound.

Chief vaulted over the sandbag pile. Archangel decloaked in the doorway as Chief charged towards him, getting ready to hit him with a heavy punch. Archangel activated his overshields just in time. The Spartan punched the Turian right in the chest, sending Archangel flying across the room. He rolled backwards across the floor as he landed and came to a stop on one knee, his sniper rifle aiming for the Spartan.

Chief dived behind a table, but not before Archangel's shot brought down his shields. "So, you're the Master Chief?" Archangel asked.

"Yeah. And you must be Archangel." Chief said as he switched to his shotgun as he waited for his shields to recharge.

"Oh, that's just a name the locals gave me for all my good deeds." Chief heard the Turian taunt. "I don't mind it, but you can just call me Garrus."

"You call setting traps for UNSC marines good deeds?" Chief said. "You call killing my team in cold blood a good deed?"

"Considering you're all invading my home planet, yes. Yes I do." Archangel said.

"Well, I do good deeds tooâ€¦". Chief said as he vaulted over the table and charged. Archangel rose from behind another table and fired off a shot. Chief's shields took the brunt of it as he rose his shotgun and fired, bringing down Archangel's shields as well. He rushed forward.

Spartan time kicked in.

He saw the Turian reach to his thigh and pull out an SMG in slow motion. He recognized the weapon as an M-8 Tempest, a small but powerful submachine gun that'll tear the Chief to shreds if he allows it to. But it wasn't even a contest. Chief could already tell that he would deliver his melee strike faster than Archangel could take aim and fire.

Chief smacked the side of Archangel's head with the butt of his shotgun, knocking the alien to the ground. The Turian tried to roll onto his back to raise his SMG, but Chief stomped on the arm that held the weapon, pinning it to the ground. The Turian yelled in pain as a snapping sound was heard.

Chief pointed the shotgun at Archangel's head and pulled the trigger.

â€¦

1022 Hours, March 20th, 2683

Undisclosed Location in the Hades Nexus

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The Battle of Palaven went on for another week. To their credit, the Turians fought until their last breath. But even they could only take so much. Once all the major population centers, including Cipritine, were taken, the Turians of Palaven knew the battle was lost.

n taking Palaven, the UNSC took the largest military installation in Citadel Space as well as the cultural and economic hub of the Turian Hierarchy. In addition, the UNSC hoped that the loss of Palaven would demoralize the Turians as well. Unfortunately, it only wound up strengthening the Turians' resolve. Compounding the issue, while the UNSC successfully killed Primarch Fedorian, the Hierarchy's political leader, a new Primarch has been named; Primarch Victus. Victus is a former-general and has galvanized the Turian colonies. Even after the Fall of Palaven, they still display no interest in surrender. The Citadel War was far from over.

The Master Chief walked through the halls of the ONI ship. His thoughts drifted to his squad. James and Tali were dead. Tali was shot in the head. Medical examiners said her death was instantaneous. James wasn't as lucky. Archangel's shot pierced his lung, which subsequently filled with blood. James died slowly, choking on his own blood. He was a good man. He deserved better than that.

The Chief was summoned here by ONI after the Fall of Palaven. Something about a new mission. Eventually, the Spartan came to a door that automatically opened, allowing him to walk through. The room was the admiral's quarters alright. Plush carpet, private bar, a desk made of real oak, as well as a massive window that took up an entire wall, though the window shutter was closed at the moment. Sitting at the desk was a large man with a shaven bald head and a thick raven-black beard. He had a single scar across his right eye; a souvenir from the First Contact War. The name on his desk read _Admiral Angus McCallister. _He was the current head of ONI.

The Chief saluted. "Sir."

"At ease, Chief." Admiral McCallister said in a Scottish accent. "Take a seat." he added as he pointed to one of the chairs in front of him.

The Spartan walked up to the desk. "Mind if I stand sir?"

McCallister chuckled at that. "I suppose not, in retrospect." Indeed, if Chief took a seat, he'd probably break the chair. "You're probably wondering why you're here."

"Yes sir." Chief replied.

"Well then, I won't beat around the bush." McCallister began. "For several years now, ONI Section Three has been secretly working on a new model of stealth frigate. I can't give you all the details; classified, you understand. But all you need to know is that it is capable of being completely invisible to ship sensors for up to several hours, making it a deadly reconnaissance weapon if used correctly."

The Admiral paused. "Two weeks ago, it was stolen."

"By who?" Master Chief asked.

"This Turian." McCallister said as he handed the Chief a datapad. Chief took the datapad and looked at the photo. It was a barefaced Turian with no tattoos, as well as elongated 'horns' extending back from the sides of his skull. "Saren Arterius. He and a small group of other Turians, plus some Salarians and Asari, broke into one of our compounds and stole the stealth frigate from dry dock."

"Hierarchy Blackwatch?" Chief asked.

"You wish." McCallister replied with a chuckle. "Spectre. One of the Council's personal lap dogs, and one of the best ones they've got. Your mission will be track him down."

The Chief was taken aback. "Track him down, sir?"

"We can't have a Council Spectre flying up and down the galaxy with a sophisticated prototype stealth frigate." McCallister stated. "He could be in UNSC territory _right bloody now_, and we'd never know it."

"With all due respect sir, how am I supposed to track down someone like that?" Chief asked.

McCallister smiled an evil smile. "Saren isn't the only one with a fancy ship." McCallister then got up from his desk and walked over to the window. He pressed the button to open the shutters. Chief walked up to the window and saw something floating in space.

It was massive. Five kilometers from bow to stern. It was black as night in color, though the Spartan could just make out some red lights along its surface. Most odd of all, its shape reminded the Chief of a squid or cuttlefish. It was being tended to by smaller UNSC research and maintenance ships that looked like cleaner fish before it. "What is it?" Chief asked.

"A ship." the admiral plainly answered.

"Another prototype from Section Three?" Chief asked.

"Nope. Prothean artifact. It's in pretty damn good shape for being over fifty thousand years, but I suppose the vacuum of space probably helped with that. Section One found it floating around near the Perseus Veil and brought it here for study. From what we can tell, it's a warship." McCallister explained. He turned to the Chief. "She's yours now, Chief."

"Mine?" Chief asked.

"The _Sovereign_ is intimidatingly large and overwhelmingly powerful. Perfect ship for a Spartan." McCallister said.

"Sir, I don't know if I can be a ship captain." Chief said. "I'm just a Master Chief."

"Not anymore." Admiral McCallister said. "On behalf of the United Nations Space Command, I hereby promote you to Commander. You are now

the acting commanding officer of the _Sovereign_ and all her crew. Are we clear on that?"

"â€|Yes sir." Chief replied.

"Good." the admiral said. "And don't worry. Humanity has seen you adapt to various circumstances before, and you came through for us every time. This time will be no different." He turned and began to walk out of the office. "Be in the hangar in thirty minutes. The engineers will give you a tour of your new ship and show you all the bells and whistles." With that, McCallister left.

Chief looked back out the window to the odd shipâ€|..his _ship, he realized.

â€|This was good. This was good that he was going to be the commander of this ship. The _Sovereign _was going to serve the Chief well. Not only will it help him track down Saren Arterius, but it will also lead Humanity to victory.

Chief wasn't sure why he felt that. Just a good feeling, he supposed.

â€|..

And there you have it, folks! The Last Spartan; finally perfected! And this is just the beginning! I look forward to writing about the Master Chief's adventures as he travels the galaxy on board the **_Sovereign. **_**Great things are on the horizon, I think.**

I apologize if my grammar and spelling aren't up to par here. I didn't have time to proofread like I usually do, as I had a tight deadline to meet. Thankfully, I was able to post this exactly when I was supposed to post it :)

2. To quote Dark Helmet FOOLED YOOOOU!

Okay. 24 Hours, over fifty reviews, over thirty follows, and a mention of this little incident under "Crowning Moment of Funny" on The Last Spartan's TVtropes page. I think this joke has gone on long enough.

That's right! April Fools! A little late, yes, but take note of the date on which this fanfic was originally posted. It DOES indeed say 4-1-13, so in my book, I posted it on the right day. Thirty minutes before midnight, but the right day nonetheless.

To any who were fooled by this little gag of mine and were very upset as a result, I sincerely apologize. Don't worry. The original Last Spartan isn't going anywhere. Though I may follow the advice of reviewers like Korten and Warmaster Tzeentch, and maybe turn this fanfic into what TVtropes calls a "Mirror Universe" style spin-off. I'll think about it.

And to any who were fooled by this hoax and were actually very **_happy**_** about this rebootâ€|**

**Pffffffffffff-HAAAAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! Really? What? Really? You

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
**â€|

**** .ahaâ€¦| . . . ****

$$\in | ** . \text{ahahaha} \in | \dots **$$

****ahooohooohoooooâ€¦****

****Best April Fool's Day of my life.****

3. Chapter 2

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**It's that time of year againâ€¦.**
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"Dropping in threeâ€|.twoâ€|.oneâ€|."

Saren clenched his mandibles as the 'mako,' as the Humans called it, landed harshly. ODS'Ts and ODAVs, the notion of dropping armed forces directly into the battlefield from low orbit, was just one of many testaments to Human insanity, he felt. Still, here he was on Therum's surface, apparently no worse for wear. "Status." he ordered.

"Everything looks good." Nyreen reported from the co-pilot seat.
"We're ready to roll, Saren."

"Well, say what you want, but the Humans make sturdy vehicles, at least." Saren commented before gripping the wheel and smashing the floor pedal, sending the mako surging down the path.

"Spirits, Saren!" Nyreen blurted out. "Do you really have to drive like a freaking Krogan?!" Saren merely cackled evilly in response. "Not funny." she added as she regained her composure.

With Palaven having fallen to the might of the UNSC, things had gotten desperate for the Council Races. Well, 'fallen' might not have been the right word. Even after the Humans declared their conquest of the Turian homeworld officially complete, the Turian resistance are still fighting them tooth and talon. There are even huge swaths of territory on Palaven that are still heavily contested between the UNSC and the resistance. In any case, the Hierarchy military was dealt a heavy blow. By now, it was clear that the Humans could not be defeated through brute force alone.

Thankfully, the Salarian STG made a massive discovery not long after the Fall of Palaven; the UNSC was working on a new type of stealth frigate that looked promising. Seizing an opportunity, Spectre Saren Arterius was sent with a small team deep into Human territory to steal the frigate. The plan went off without a hitch, and Saren named the new ship Noravia in honor of a pivotal battle from Turian history. Along with the frigate, Saren and his team acquired several pieces of intelligence.

First was the fact that the Master Chief was in command of a ship the

Humans found; the _Sovereign. _Originally a Prothean artifact, the UNSC decked it out and made it service-ready, and it's currently being toted as the Last Spartan's flagship. Second, the Master Chief was sent to track down something known as 'the Conduit,' a suspected Prothean super weapon located somewhere in the Attican Traverse. The Citadel Council has made it a priority that Saren finds the Conduit before the Chief does.

The final piece of intelligence they found, however, was very interesting indeed. A Prothean Beacon.

It was destroyed, unfortunately. But not before it gave Saren visions of synthetic life forms, 'Reapers,' slaughtering organics, presumably the Protheans. The Council didn't believe him though. They weren't concerned with dreams; the nightmares they had to face in the real world were a much greater threat. Still, Saren couldn't shake the feeling that his visions were somehow significant in all this.

So it was that, as acting captain of the _Noravius, _Saren set out into the Attican Traverse in search of both the Conduit and the Master Chief. Coming along with him were a few companions. Nyreen Kandros was a biotic whose cabal was wiped out in the Fall of Palaven and has harbored a healthy hatred of Humans since. She and Saren worked well together; unsurprising as Turian biotics are trained to work well together, as they are often deployed in small, covert groups. That said, command was concerned that, as a consequence of losing her entire cabal to the Humans, she might be too emotionally invested in the fight and may be suffering from impaired judgement as a result. Thankfully, Saren would be the one giving the orders on this op.

Next was Tarquin Victus. Yes, Tarquin Victus, as in the son of none other than former general and current primarch, Adrienn Victus. Given the weight of Saren's mission, Primarch Victus wanted someone he could absolutely trust on a personal level to accompany the Spectre. Needless to say, it earned the poor boy more than a few dirty looks from the ship's crew; nepotism is severely frowned upon in Turian society. Saren himself would be lying if he said he completely trusted the Primarch's judgement on this one. Still, Tarquin was a good soldier and competent marksman from what he's seen of him thus far, so there's no immediate reason to get rid of Tarquin. Spirits willing, he'll _earn _the right to fight alongside the legendary Spectre soon enough.

Tarquin and Nyreen were the only Turian members of Saren's squad. This was a multi-species war after all, so Saren simply couldn't look to his own race for help. Alien fighters came forward as well, looking to sign up for the Spectre's cause. Knowing that he would need all the help he could get, Saren welcomed them on board.

First, there was Lieutenant Ollo Tolan, a Salarian from STG and the team's tech expert. The Lieutenant came strongly recommended by none other than the famed Captain Kirrahe, a war hero who famously held a line against UNSC marines on a Salarian colony a few months ago. Tolan worked directly under the war hero, but unlike the comparably amicable Kirrahe, Tolan was cold and calculating and not very personable. Even more problematic, the Salarian made it clear early on that he doesn't exactly hold Spectres in high regard and resented being under Saren's command. Thankfully, he was a professional which meant that he would follow orders, like them or not.

The same could sadly not be said of Bray Ny'shahk, a former mercenary and liaison from the Batarian Resistance Movement. When the Humans invaded Khar'Shahn, it didn't take long for the Citadel to be overwhelmed by Batarian refugees seeking asylum from their new Human masters. Formed and led by Ka'Hairal Balak, the Batarian Resistance Movement's goal is to wage war on Humanity via guerrilla warfare, the end goal being the complete liberation of all Batarian space. Bray used to be a merc in the Terminus until he heard news of Khar'Shan's fall and decided that he should sign up for the cause. He was a good soldier but a bit cocky at times, not to mention he made it clear to Saren pretty early on that he was only on the Noravius on Balak's orders; he personally thought that it was a crap detail.

By far the oddest member of the team was Niftu Cal, also a tech expert and a Volus. Yes, you read that right. A Volus. With the Human-Council War having grown so desperate, the Council has turned to giving guns to pretty much anybody capable of using them, leading to the active involvement of species that were once rarely seen on the battlefield. Niftu Cal was a tech expert with mildly powerful biotics as well, but still, even with the biotics Saren had his doubts. His rumored history of drug use did little to ease the Spectre's concern.

Finally, by far the most high-profile member of Saren's team was possibly also the most powerful and influential. Before the war, she was an accomplished theologian on Thessia. But with the UNSC on the march, Matriarch Benezia has taken it upon herself to rally her followers. Benezia herself had agreed to join Saren's team, believing that Saren will ultimately be the hero the galaxy needed. Saren himself wasn't so sure of that; he was just trying to get the job done, really. Still, with a rather dysfunctional squad under his command, it was good to know that someone believed in him, and an Asari matriarch no less.

Tarquin fidgeted in his seat as the mako made its way through the volcanic environment of Therum. He turned towards Benezia. "You sure Liara's here?" he asked.

"Wherever there are Prothean ruins, she would have been there." Benezia said. "She was always drawn to the past. She found the Protheans absolutely alluring." The matriarch smiled. "I imagine if Protheans were alive today, she'd take one as her bondmate."

Benezia paused, her smile fading. She turned to Saren. "Liara and I have not spoken in many years." she told him. "I don't know how she'll greet me."

"Well, it'll either be us or the Humans." Saren said. Their mission on Therum was to find and secure Dr. Liara T'soni, an archaeologist with a specialty in Protheans and incidentally Benezia's daughter. Benezia had all but insisted that they find Liara, and not just because of the obvious; years before the war, she was derided by the archaeological community for her 'cycles' theory. Even Benezia herself doubted it back in those days. But in light of Saren's vision, Benezia had a feeling that perhaps her daughter was right all along. Perhaps she could provide some insight into Saren's vision as well as possibly even the location of the Conduit.

"What makes you so sure the Humans would even be here?" Tarquin

asked.

"Call it a hunch." Saren said. "Seems like everywhere I go these days, there are Humans looking to kill me."

"Wellâ€¦we're on a useless planet in the middle of the Traverse." Tarquin pointed out. "I doubt we'll see any Humans out here."

It was then that objects suddenly slammed into the road before the mako from above. At first glance, they appeared to be comets striking the ground. But Saren had fought enough Humans to know better; these were ODS drop pods. "You just _had_ to say something, didn't you Daddy's Boy?" Bray deadpanned from the passenger compartment.

"Everyone hold on." Saren said as he slammed the gas. "This could get bumpy!"

"You mean it wasn't already?" Nyreen sardonically asked.

"Ignoring that." Saren said as he pulled a power slide, turning a pair of ODSs into roadkill.

The mako continued its way through the winding canyon paths, ODSs continuing to harass them the whole way. Still, Saren abided by a simple philosophy behind the wheel; don't stop for anything. The ODSs may be legendary killers, but they can't kill what they can't catch. Once they lost the Humans, the mako eventually came to a stop in front of a thin gap in the wall ahead of them. "You sure that's the way, Nyreen?" Saren asked.

"Says so on the map right here." Nyreen said. "The ruins are definitely that way."

"Alright then, looks like we're strutting it the rest of the way." Saren announced to his squad. "Everyone pile out."

Piled out they did as each member of the team was just barely able to squeeze through the gap. After navigating it one by one, they resumed following the path up a hill. Their weapons out, they proceeded slowly. Not a sound was heard except the wind and the bubbling of nearby lava. The team then knelt behind a series of boulders in the middle of the trail. Saren popped his head up to make sure the coast was clear. Seeing no hostiles, he signaled to Benezia to move up. The Asari nodded and proceeded.

This was the first time Saren saw Benezia outside of that regal black dress she was almost always wearing. Now, she was wearing a comparatively slimmer outfit; a regal looking combat hard suit not unlike what the Justicars wear. It looked good on her.

It was then that Saren heard something. His head snapped up towards the sound. At the top of the cliff above him was nothing, but he heard another sound like rocks shuffling. "The way ahead is clear." Benezia reported over TEAMCOM.

"Don't be so sure." Saren replied. "I don't think we're alone here. Proceed forward and stay alert."

The squad continued ascending the hill, through narrow crevices and

up a ramp of rock that didn't look entirely natural. Saren's senses were on high alert. He knew he heard something on top of the cliffs. Between that and the confirmed presence of Humans on the planet, Saren was almost sure that they were walking right into an ambush. "Ollo. Are you sure we're going the right way?" Saren asked.

"The HUD map says to go this way, we're going this way." Ollo stated.

"You trust technology too much." Nyreen said as she also looked around, about as paranoid as Saren was.

"You don't trust it enough." Ollo replied. He held up his hand as they reached the top of the natural ramp. "For instance, thanks to technology, I now know that there are neutral targets about."

"What?" Saren said as he snapped his head towards Ollo.

"Several white dots on the HUD." Ollo stated. Saren checked his own HUD and, sure enough, several white dots immediately to their left.

"Weapons free!" Saren shouted as he whipped out his assault rifle, his squad whipping out their own weapons. They pointed them at the top of the cliff that Saren was pointing his own rifle at. "Come on out, whoever you are!" Saren cried out. He knew they weren't Humans; otherwise they would've shown up as red on their motion trackers. Still, that didn't mean they were friendly.

That's when the first one showed up, followed by a dozen more of its kin. They were tall and lanky in frame, yet muscular. Saren knew what he was looking at, yet he couldn't believe it. He thought they were extinct, wiped out by the Humans a century ago; the first victims of their evil.

It was then that several more appeared around the team; seemingly out of thin air. They literally shimmered from nothingness into a wide circle around them, wearing black armor and keeping their hands on the hilts of their swords. "Did your HUD detect them?" Nyreen asked.

"Shut up." Ollo hissed in reply.

"I am N'tho of the House of 'Sraom!" One of them bellowed from the top of the cliff. "And you are now trespassing in the domain of the Sangheili!"

â€|..

Once the squad was arrested, they were 'escorted' into a nearby cave and into a winding set of tunnels. The further down they went, the more signs they saw of settlement, of lights and carved rock. Niftu was straining against his cuffs, his hands glowing blue. Bray tilted his head to the right as he observed this. "You're not a 'biotic god,' Niftu. Just give it up." he said.

"I'm telling you, I biotically lifted a whole air car once_" the Volus insisted.

"Sure you did." Bray deadpanned.

"Close your jaws!" one of the Sangheili demanded. "Or I shall bind them shut!"

Eventually, they came into a whole network of catacombs that were very clearly inhabited by hundreds of Sangheili. They passed through huge crowds gathered in an underground bazaar. "Fascinating." Benezia whispered to Saren. "They must have been living here in secret for years."

Saren looked around the tunnels, noting the presence of metal in the rock. "These aren't just caves they're living in either." he whispered back to her. "I think these are the Prothean ruins we've been looking for. Look. The ruins have been so long that the rock formed around it."

"So it has." Benezia observed.

Eventually, the SpecOps Sangheili took them to what Saren could only describe as some kind of throne room. Sitting upon the throne was a Sangheili wearing a bronze armor that was unmistakeable to anyone remotely familiar with this species. "Kneel!" the one named N'tho barked. With that, the other elites knocked the whole team over onto their bellies. "Your holiness, we found these trespassers in our territory. They must be the ones the Humans are looking for." N'tho told him.

The Arbiter rose from his throne. "Give me one good reason not to kill you allâ€¦." he growled at them.

"Ohâ€¦..I don't knowâ€¦.." Saren said as he finally able to stand back up. "Enemy of my enemy is my friend?"

"What enemy do we share?" the Arbiter asked.

"The Humans." Saren explained. "I don't know if you've noticed, but my species, all of our species really, have been locked in a perilous war with the Humans."

The Arbiter huffed. "Then you are doomed." the Arbiter grimly stated. "Not since the Flood has the galaxy seen a species as vile as the Humans. Always expanding, consuming, leaving naught in their wake but desolation. To fight them is to fight death itself. We tried to oppose them once, but they wound up gutting us."

"How?" Benezia asked. "How did they push your species to the brink of extinction?"

"Through sabotage, the cowards." the Arbiter snarled. "They funded particular factions in the Great Schism to keep us fighting amongst ourselves. They poisoned our crops, starving us. After years of this, it took little effort on their part to crush what was left of our empire. Now, we are forced to hide to survive. Not just here, but across the Attican Traverse and Terminus Systems."

"I don't believe this." Saren said with a disapproving shake of his head. "This is the Sangheili, the legendary race of brave warriors? You're hiding in holes like field vermin. This is what you've

been reduced to?"

"This is what the _Humans _have reduced us to!" The Arbiter fumed. "And considering their goal was to wipe us out entirely, I would say that we are fortunate! The UNSC has only grown _stronger _since then. What would you have me do?"

"_Fight_." Saren said. "That's what the rest of the galaxy is doing. The Turians, the Asari, the Salarrians, every day more people are rising up against the Humans and declaring 'No more!' No more enslavement, no more genocide, we have had _enough_! Soâ€|.what are _you _going to do?"

The Arbiter had no answer. "Milord!" a Sangheili in blue armor shouted as he ran up to the Arbiter and knelt. "The Humans! They've found our gates and are preparing to destroy it!"

"They've found usâ€|." N'tho said. He turned to Saren and his team. "For _you _have brought them here!"

"We were looking for my daughter!" Benezia shouted back at them. "Liara T'soni!"

"Mother?"

It was then that Benezia looked down a hallway, the same one that the Sangheili scout entered from. "Liara?" Benezia asked, stunned. "Thank the Goddess that you are safe." she said after a moment of pause.

It was then that a booming sound was heard and reverberated throughout the catacombs. "We will not be safe for long." the Arbiter said. He turned to Liara. "Help the women and children into the ship. The warriors will buy you time by repelling the attack as best we can."

"Of course, Arbiter." Liara said with a nod. She turned to Benezia. "We'll talk later." With that, the younger Asari took off.

"I have a proposal that I would like to make, Arbiter." Saren said. "We are warriors ourselves. If you release us, we will fight by your side."

"You're the ones who started this mess in the first place!" N'tho protested.

"All the better that we join the fight, then." Saren pointed out. "Help undo the damage we've done."

The Arbiter paused in thought. He then turned to one of the guards. "Release them." he ordered.

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Colonel Phillips watched with disdain as the smoke cleared. The stone gate still standing, the soot and Quarian corpses littered in front of the gate being the only evidence that a bomb went off at all. He rolled his eyes. "Fuckin' suits." he muttered as he took out his cigar and put it out on the backpack of the Unggoy that was polishing his boots.

While combing the surface of Therum for Liara T'soni and Saren's gang of troublemakers, the 46th UNSC Marine Battalion found a truly monstrous cavern in the side of a mountain. The ceiling was a hundred feet high and the corridors were just as long across. On a hunch, Phillips ordered the force of a thousand marines strong further into the cave and found something he had only read about in fantasy stories; a pair of double doors made from stone. Betting that there was something valuable behind it, possibly even the entrance to the Prothean ruins they were looking for, he ordered that the doors be opened. It was a task that turned out to be easier said than done.

Phillips idly kicked the boot-shiner Unggoy in the head, knocking him to the ground in the process; his usual signal that he was satisfied. The Unggoy yipped something and ran off on all fours. One of his majors walked up to him. "I'll get another batch of suits working on another bomb sir." he said.

"Have more Human engineers supervise them this time." Phillips ordered. "As entertaining as it is to watch suits get blown the fuck up by their own stupidity, it starts losing its charm the second time."

"Yes sir." the major said. "Although their leader, Korrin 'Ya-something, says that the explosive material we're giving them is too unstable."

"He says that like it's my problem." Phillips replied. "If he complains again, shoot him in the head and promote his number two."

"Illisa, sir?" the major asked.

"Yeah. She's got a nice ass." the colonel said with a chuckle. "Wouldn't mind seein' more of her bending over to check a warthog's engine."

"If you say so, sir." the major said. He gave a salute and then walked away. Phillips grunted as he whipped out a new cigar, stuck it in his mouth, and lit it.

It was around that moment that a two-foot-long iron spike impaled Phillips right through his head.

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"Told you I could hit him from this range." Bray said as he loaded another spike into his kishok harpoon gun.

"Big deal." Tarquin replied over TEAMCOM. Bray's sniper perch was a hole in the rock wall high above the Human marines. Tarquin was presumably perched in a similar spot, but Bray couldn't quite see it from where he was. "He was just standing around like an idiot. Easy headshot for anybody. Moving targets are the real challenge. Observe."

By now, the death of the lieutenant colonel had sent the entire marine detachment into a panic, blind fire in several directions in an attempt to find the source of the round. "See that big tough one down there heading for a tank?"

Bray aimed down the sights of his gun and saw the Human Tarquin was describing; a big burly one with his muscles arms exposed. He was running over towards one of the scorpions for some reason. "Yeah?" Bray asked. No sooner did the question leave his mouth than the marine's head popped like a ripe melon.

"Your move." Tarquin stated.

"Yeah, yeah." Bray said as he selected another high-priority target. One marine was yelling at the others, trying to restore order amidst the panic. Bray pulled the trigger, sending the spike right through the Human's heart.

"One, that was practically a stationary target and two, that wasn't even a headshot." Tarquin stated.

"You snipers are all the same. Headshot, headshot, headshot." Bray said. "There are other parts of the body, you know. Watch." The Batarian shot another Human officer in the leg. "See?"

"Oh, he's not even dead." Tarquin groaned. "At least _kill _them on the first shot. So unprofessional."

"Hey, he was _gonna _be a combatant, but now he can't, because he's got an 18-inch metal spike sticking out of his kneecap. It's not always about kills, just knocking them out of the fight is good enough." Bray explained.

"â€|.So you gave him a spike to the knee?" Tarquin asked.

"Yeah. So?" Bray asked in turn.

"â€|.Have you ever played a vid game called Myskrim?"

"No."

"Ah." Tarquin replied. "I should explain that joke to you once we're back on the ship."

It was at that point that even more marines started dropping dead, this time from the SpecOps elites that slipped into their midst unnoticed, thanks to the hidden doors in the walls and their active camouflage. One Human was impaled by an energy sword, causing his comrades to fire blindly at the spot where the shimmering silhouette was, ignorant to the fact that their target was no longer there.

"Child's play." one of the SpecOps elites said over the COM. "These Humans have no idea how to properly fight us."

"That is your advantage." Saren's voice replied. "Humans are a short-lived species. The last Humans to fight Sangheili in person are either elderly or dead by now. _These _Humans have never personally fought anything like your kind before."

"Perhaps you were right, Spectre." the elite replied. "Perhaps we _do _have a chance in this war. But I have yet to see _you _in this fight."

"Give me a second. My legs aren't as long as yours, so I was having difficulty keeping up." Saren replied with a light chuckle.

With that, the rest of Saren's team emerged from the hidden passages in the walls to join the Sangheili in their ambush, something a squad of marines were quick to notice. "It's Saren!" one of them. "Get him!"

Saren's hand glowed blue as he fired a biotic shockwave that knocked the marines over like bowling pins. He turned and saw that another marine had flanked him and was now pointing his rifle right at his face. Saren looked up and pointed behind the marine. "By the Spirits! _What's that?!_"

The marine looked to where Saren was pointing. Meanwhile, Saren whipped out his pistol and put a round right into the back of the foolish Human's head. "I don't know who's dumber. You for falling for that, or me for thinking that would work." he commented.

Meanwhile, Nyreen was providing cover for a squad of elites in the form of a biotic bubble. Well, a squad of elites and Ollo. "Fascinating." the Salarian commented as he fired a fireball at a marine from his omni-tool, roasting the Human alive. "I always thought that plasma rounds from a plasma-based weapon would short out shields and other electronics. But because they're kinetic bolts of matter, they're bouncing off the enemy shields about as easily as normal rounds. It makes me ponder the paths that both Human and Sangheili have taken over the last century or so."

"Can you shut up please?" Nyreen asked, clearly irritated. "I'm trying to concentrate."

"I'm just commenting on the oddities of the technological forces at play here." Ollo went on. "In fact, I wouldn't even call them oddities. I'd even go so far as to call them inconsistencies. Contradictions, even. Minor ones mind you, but still clear for all to see if one looks closely enough. Next thing you'll know, the Sangheili have a thirty-kilometer long ship that will inexplicably run on eezo."

"You always do this, Ollo!" Nyreen shouted. "You gotta nitpick every little thing! Do you have any idea how many headaches I've had over the last few months because of you?!"

"Well, maybe I wouldn't NEED to nitpick if the designers of this technology did their homework on the proper mechanics behind these fundamental concepts!" Ollo shouted back.

Meanwhile, Bray had made his way down from his perch to join in the brawl. He warmed up his omni-tool and saw a marine charging towards him. With a smirk, he fired his ballistic blades at the Human, the spikes puncturing his armor and impaling him, one of the spikes catching him in the throat. As the spikes were merely disposable silicon-carbide weapons flash-forged by Bray's omni-tool's min-fabricator, suspended in a mass effect field to maintain a solid shape, the spikes soon faded from existence, leaving the marine to bleed to death while Bray whipped out assault rifle to fight more Humans.

However, his killing spree looked to be cut short when a trio of

Humans in a very special armor appeared before him, landing right in front of him from above via their t-packs. Bray raised his weapon but the Human directly in front of him knocked it out his hands and dealt a heel-kick to his chest, knocking him to the ground. Bray was able to get a good look at them; the helmets were a dead giveaway. ODSs.

"Any last words, four-eyes?" the one in the middle said as he pointed his SMG right at Bray's head, along with his two cohorts. It was then that a biotic orb flew out of nowhere and smacked the ODS right in the head. Bray heard a snapping sound which was probably his neck, judging from the way the body crumbled like a puppet whose strings just got cut. His two minions also died by receiving high-flying biotic orbs right to the faces and they too collapsed. Bray was quick to recover and get back on his feet. He turned towards his savior.

There was Niftu Cal, his hands still glowing with a biotic aura. "Told you I'm a biotic god." he said.

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"Sir! We're getting our asses kicked!" a random marine reported to Lieutenant Colonel Jackson. "These are _elites!_ Just like the ones they fought in the Great War!"

"Impossible!" Jackson proclaimed. "The elites are extinct!"

"Well _clearly _we missed a few!" the marine exasperatingly shouted. "Not only that, but Saren and his team are here too! They're all here! The four-eyes, the other raptors, the gecko, the fucking _Volus _of all things, and even that Asari Matriarch!"

"Okay, calm down son." Jackson said in an attempt to calm the panicking marine. "This Asari. Are you sure she's a matriarch?"

"Well one, her tits are bigger than her own head, and two, her biotics are more powerful than anything we've faced from an Asari before!" the marine went on.

"How powerful are we talking?" Jackson asked. It was at that precise moment that three scorpion tanks biotically flew through the air over their heads and crashed at the far end of the cavern, one of them landing on top of a fireteam. "Okay, you've made your point. Come on. Let's go get the hunters."

The two of them jogged over to a pair of large crates with holes in each one. "Okay, I'll get this one you get the other one." he said as he grabbed a cattle prod and tossed another one to the subordinate marine. "Get 'em nice and pissed, open the door, and then stay out of their way."

The marine nodded as he jammed the prod through the hole, shocking the occupant. What the marine heard next was a roar that was more felt than heard. Jackson did the same to his own crate, but with a far more practiced hand. "Come on you lousy can of worms!" Jackson yelled as he continued shocking the creature inside the crate. "Wake the fuck up you useless fish bait!"

After a minute or two of prolonged shocking and shouting insults, the crates were absolutely jumping, their occupants eager to kill. "Okay marine, get behind the crates!" Jackson yelled as he ducked behind the crates himself. He pulled out a remote control and jammed a button. After a series of popping bolts and screws went flying, the lids of the crates fell, freeing the occupants.

The Mgalekgolo of the UNSC were ten times more savage than they ever were in the Covenant, thanks mostly to selective breeding and handling techniques to encourage maximum aggression. The frames that bound the eel colonies together were UNSC dark green, and were quadrupedal in shape. Their 'skulls' were wolf-shaped helmets with jagged iron spikes for teeth, a functional jaw, and their signature fuel rod cannon inside the mouths. They howled like the animals they resembled and charged at the Sangheili.

"Hunters are active! Repeat! Hunters are active!" Jackson yelled over the COM. "If you don't wanna get chewed up, STAY OUTTA THEIR WAY!"

The warning did not come quick enough for a few unfortunate marines who were unlucky enough to be the first thing one of the hunters saw. It grabbed a hold of the Human and used it like a chew toy. Another Human shot the creature in the head, the rounds bouncing off the skull. It growled at him. "Not _us_ you idiot!" the marine yelled. He pointed to the Sangheili. "Eat the _tall ones!_"

The Mgalekgolo obliged by lunging at the nearest elite and tearing it to shreds, its bond brother doing the same. "Heads up guys, you've got hunters!" Tarquin reported over TEAMCOM.

"I will take care of them." Benezia replied. She ran over to meet the hunters head-on. A platoon of ODSs tried to intercept her, but a singularity thrown at them stopped their efforts in short order. It didn't take long for the hunters to spot her and scramble over one another to get at her. Benezia then used her biotics to lift the hunters up mid-charge, crush them in mid-air with warps, and allowed them to plop down on the ground in gooey orange puddles.

"Bullshit!" cried one of the marines who witnessed the event as he stood up in indignation. "She should _not _be kicking our collective asses _that _hard!" He was then shot in the head, courtesy of Tarquin's aim.

"This is Liara T'soni." the young Asari's voice said over the COM. "Everyone is on board the escape ship."

"Very well." N'tho's voice replied. "All units, fall back! We will join in the evacuation! Kill every Human you see between yourselves and your designated exits!"

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"And then what happened?" Saren asked. Once the evacuation of the Therum ruins was completed, the squad sans Benezia met up again in the _Noravius_'s comm room, Liara sitting in Benezia's usual seat this time. The young Asari was regaling how she discovered the Sangheili settlement.

"After I fell in the hole, the Sangheili found me." Liara went on.

"They didn't trust me at first, but as I studied them and the Prothean ruins in which they dwelled, I became fascinated with their culture. So I've been helping them however I could."

It was then that the _Noravius's _pilot's voice came on. "Saren, we've got a transmission from the _Shadow of Intent._"

"Patch it through." Saren ordered. The image of the Arbiter appeared from the hologram. He gave Saren the Sangheili salute.

"You fought well today, Saren Arterius." the Arbiter began. "I have already sent word throughout Sangheili outposts throughout the galaxy; the Sangheili are to rise again and fight once more. My people owe you a great debt for shaking us from our cowardice."

"Just doing my job." Saren replied with a shrug. "I'll pass the word on to the Council to expect some delegates from your people on the Citadel. At this point, they'll welcome any ally they can get in this war."

"So I hope." the Arbiter replied. "Before I depart, there is one last thing."

It was then that the doors to the comm room opened and N'tho walked in. He saluted the Spectre. "N'tho 'Sraom, reporting for duty." he stated.

"N'tho is young, but he is talented." the Arbiter. "He shall serve you well."

Saren nodded at the Arbiter and turned to N'tho. He walked up to the Sangheili and shook his hand courteously. "Welcome aboard, N'tho."

"Glad to be aboard any ship that makes a business of killing Humans." N'tho replied with a chuckle as he returned the handshake.

"May your Gods be with you, Spectre Saren Arterius." the Arbiter said.

"And yours with you, Arbiter Jul 'Mdama." Saren replied. The Arbiter saluted and his image faded. Saren turned to Liara. "Your mother is waiting for you in the med bay on deck two. She'll tell you everything we know about the Conduit." He paused. "I imagine the two of you will have other things to talk about as well."

"Yes." Liara said, a little unsure of herself. She stood up from her seat, took a deep breath, and left the comm room, presumably to see a mother she hasn't talked to in many years.

"She gonna be okay?" Bray asked.

"Family business." Saren said. "Better to let them talk it out themselves."

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In the depths of the _Sovereign, _the Master Chief observed footage of Saren fighting UNSC marines on Therum. The Spartan shook his head

in disapproval. He couldn't believe it; the finest military force in Human history, made into a mockery by a ragtag bunch of aliens. Even more disturbing was the revelation that the Sangheili somehow survived their extinction and were thirsty for vengeance.

But by far the most interesting aspect of the vid was Saren himself. At first, Chief felt that he easily outclassed the Spectre. Now though? Maybe Saren was stronger than the Spartan originally gave him credit for. "Cortana." the Spartan said.

The AI's avatar appeared on the arm of Chief's command chair. "Yeah John?" the AI asked.

"Bring me every scrap of data you can find across the extranet about Spectre Agent Saren Arterius." Chief said. He paused. "And have one of the grunts bring me another aspirin."

"Another headache?" Cortana asked.

"Yeah." Chief said as he looked around his room. "Whoever built this ship has no sense of interior design, I'll tell ya. Feels like the walls and the ceilings are pressing in on me sometimes."

"It could be that the Protheans didn't _actually_ build this ship." Cortana asked. "So the claustrophobia may have been a deliberate design choice by a species who's actually more comfortable in small, tight spaces. Possibly an insectoid race or - "

"Just get me the data and the aspirin." Chief said.

"Will do." Cortana said as her image faded.

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****Will these new allies help Saren? Or will the Might of Mankind prevail and plunge the galaxy into darkness? Find out next year on the next exciting episode of THE LAST SPARTAN! VERSION TWENTY!****

****Alright, enough shenanigans. Next TLS update will be to **_**real **_**fanfic.****

End
file.